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Chair: Mr. Saikal ..... (Afghanistan)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 28: Social development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (*continued*) (A/73/214)

(b) Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family (*continued*) (A/73/61-E/2018/4, A/73/211/Rev.1, A/73/213, A/73/220 and A/73/254)

(c) Literacy for life: shaping future agendas (*continued*) (A/73/292)

1. **Mr. Edrees** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the continuing deliberations on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly had the same focus on trends in inequality within and among countries. Those discussions should be action-oriented, to implement the objectives of the World Summit and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Member States should also address the particular needs of Africa and least developed countries and highlight the situation and specific needs of young people, older persons, persons with disabilities, families and indigenous peoples.

2. The Group was deeply concerned about the uneven progress achieved in fulfilling the interrelated commitments made at the World Summit and by the lack of satisfactory progress of social development. The Group reaffirmed its commitment to working towards the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions and building on the achievements of, and lessons learned from, the Millennium Development Goals.

3. International development cooperation, especially North-South cooperation, remained a fundamental catalyst for sustainable development and, most importantly, in promoting the Programme of Action of the World Summit. The international community must uphold the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and push for North-South cooperation, as the main channel for development financing, to continue to play its key role. Developed countries were urged to fulfil their unmet official development assistance commitments. South-South cooperation, however, was a collective endeavour of developing countries and its agenda should be driven by the countries of the South. As a complement to North-South cooperation, it deserved its own separate and independent promotion.

4. Addressing inequality in all its dimensions was essential to eradicating poverty, advancing social progress and achieving sustainable development. Despite the decline in global income inequality, income inequality between and within countries and regions had persisted and had even risen in many countries. Member States and the international community must learn from the experience of the countries that had successfully reduced both income and non-income inequalities and adopt the right mix of policies that had proved to be effective elsewhere, taking into consideration their unique national contexts.

5. In response to the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and its follow-up processes (A/73/61-E/2018/4), which indicated that some Member States had made efforts to strengthen existing institutions charged with the implementation of family policies, the Group invited Member States to invest in family-oriented policies and programmes as important tools for supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. In addition, family-related research awareness-raising activities should be promoted at the national and regional levels. States must also take into account the realities of an ageing population in their efforts to eradicate poverty, and the international community must work together to ensure that the rights of older persons were upheld, while avoiding multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and adopting a holistic approach that recognized the growing need for affordable and high-quality long-term care.

6. The Group welcomed progress achieved in recent years by Governments and other stakeholders, including civil society organizations and the private sector, in mainstreaming disability issues into inclusive policies and programmes for the implementation of national development efforts and the 2030 Agenda and looked forward to seeing the United Nations 2018 flagship report on disability and development: realization of the Sustainable Development Goals by, for and with persons with disabilities.

7. **Mr. Hilale** (Morocco), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said that addressing all dimensions of inequality was essential to eradicating poverty, advancing social progress and achieving sustainable development for all. Although many countries had shown remarkable economic progress over the past decade and a half, lifting millions out of extreme poverty and making education and health care available to more people, substantial digital divides and

inequalities persisted between countries and regions and between developed and developing countries. The general developmental crisis in Africa had not been fundamentally altered, and African countries remained at the bottom of any list measuring social development and economic activity, in part because of economic, financial and food-related crises, climate change, civil strife, conflicts and HIV and AIDS pandemics. The Group was committed to improving State financing to strengthen national health systems and called for continuing support from the international community to boost African economies and promote sustainable development.

8. Although there was no one-size-fits-all approach, the international community could implement general strategies to prevent the rise of national and global inequality by fostering inclusive and sustainable growth; boosting economic growth and social equity; providing the workforce with education and skills development; promoting the integration of those in vulnerable situations; and creating an enabling environment for business investment, entrepreneurship and donor support. The gender perspective should be systematically considered and integrated into inclusive sustainable development policies to help women to achieve their full potential.

9. Despite advances in certain areas, more needed to be done to accelerate progress. In that regard, the 2030 Agenda, through its people-centred and integrated approach, including a particular commitment to the empowerment of vulnerable and disadvantaged people, its emphasis on leaving no one behind and its calls for collaborative partnerships among all countries and stakeholders in implementing an ambitious plan of action, provided an important milestone for achieving equality and equity for all. All stakeholders would have to refocus and intensify their efforts on areas where progress had been slow. Implementing Sustainable Development Goal 17, which would bring together the international community, civil society, the private sector and other actors, was key to accelerating efforts towards achieving all the other Goals and ensuring that no one was left behind.

10. Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want presented a vision of "an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the international arena" to ensure positive socioeconomic transformation within 50 years of its endorsement by the African Union, and contained a roadmap for achieving that vision, in which States members of the African Union were encouraged to promote equality and equity through sustainable development, good governance, democracy and the rule of law. The first of seven aspirations outlined in Agenda 2063 was for a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development. Emphasis was placed on the need to empower all people, including those living in vulnerable situations, through inclusive growth that created decent jobs and improved access to social protection and through measures to ensure that no individual remained below the poverty line. The Group reaffirmed its commitment to improved social development and reduced inequalities among people in Africa. It appealed to its partners and the international community to continue to support the efforts of the African States towards achieving those endeavours.

11. **Mr. Richardson** (Saint Lucia), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), said that, despite the challenges arising from the vulnerabilities faced by CARICOM member States as small island developing States, the Community remained fully committed to improving the well-being of its people and enabling them to attain their highest potential in order to build more resilient societies, regardless of hurdles encountered along the path to full implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

12. Building social resilience continued to be pivotal for the growth and development of the region. Through a strategic plan covering the period 2015–2019, CARICOM would continue to focus on three key areas: advancing initiatives for health and wellness; advancing human capital development; and enhancing citizen security and justice. Mindful of the correlation between good health and economic growth, CARICOM welcomed the recent convening of two high-level meetings, one on tuberculosis and another on non-communicable diseases, which were among the leading causes of death in the region. In that regard, CARICOM had launched an initiative called Caribbean Moves designed to move people towards healthier lifestyles. It was part of a regional approach to tackling non-communicable diseases that included making national health promotion programmes more comprehensive, effective, equitable and sustainable, in part through new communication techniques to motivate and engage persons of all ages, especially young people.

13. CARICOM was committed to using a multidimensional approach to reduce the inequality gap and continued to strive to provide greater access to quality education, so that people could acquire the necessary skills and competencies and be prepared for current societal and workplace demands. To that end, CARICOM worked assiduously to implement its human resource development strategy for 2030, aimed at contributing to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 4, with a focus

on the development of the whole person, including education for all stages of life.

14. Recognizing the role of youth as pivotal to building more resilient societies and the role of volunteerism in empowering talented and inspirational young people, CARICOM reaffirmed its full commitment to strengthening existing youth policies that would empower future generations and welcomed the collaboration between United Nations agencies and regional institutions in convening the Caribbean Forum on Population, Youth and Development, held in Guyana in July 2018. The Forum served to promote youth engagement on key developmental processes, including the Sustainable Development Goals, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development.

15. The Community recognized the importance of adequately addressing the specific needs of the steadily ageing population in the Caribbean, in particular with regard to long-term care, mindful of the contributions made by older persons during their productive lives. Given the link between ageing and non-communicable diseases and the importance of ensuring that the relevant policies and protection mechanisms were in place, CARICOM welcomed the progress made in bringing greater attention to the question of ageing. It also welcomed the progress made in addressing the challenges faced by persons with disabilities and in facilitating their participation in fulfilment of the Goals.

16. The Caribbean region was vulnerable to the ravages of more intense, frequent and catastrophic storms as a result of climate change, and one storm could erase all previous gains, thus further widening the inequality gap. It was therefore imperative to continue to build resilience so as to preserve the infrastructure, resources and way of life of the region. Recalling the legacy of Nelson Mandela and his address to the World Summit in 1995, CARICOM reiterated its commitment to the principle of inclusion. The States members would continue to work together, within the region and with the rest of the international community, to ensure that their peoples and all peoples could attain their highest potential and that no one would be left behind.

17. **Ms. Scott** (Namibia), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), said that the theme endorsed for the 2018/19 period by the thirty-eighth ordinary summit of SADC Heads of State and Government, "Promoting Infrastructure Development and Youth Empowerment for Sustainable Development", represented a clear call for youth to be placed at the forefront of efforts relating to the Community's industrialization agenda, directing the focus of member States to infrastructure development, youth empowerment and sustainable development. At a recent meeting, the SADC ministers of information and communication technologies had discussed plans to promote interconnectivity in the region, a key target that would ensure access to information and, consequently, promote sustainable development. SADC had also approved the operationalization of the SADC University of Transformation, which would support that agenda through entrepreneurship, innovation, commercialization, technology transfer, enterprise development and the digital and knowledge economy. The establishment of the University was consistent with the Secretary-General's recommendation to leverage science, technology and innovation for inclusive and sustainable development. Young people had a key role in building those skills and in establishing aligned economies.

18. Noting the widespread inequality highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (A/73/214), SADC remained concerned about the impact of the current global financial crisis and the unequal distribution of wealth. As inequality in all its aspects affected the most marginalized people, efforts to alleviate poverty must include efficient, sustainable and effective social policies. SADC member States therefore continued to implement the Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan for the period 2005–2020, striving to accelerate poverty eradication and the attainment of other development goals, including combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic, and achieving gender equality and sustainable development.

19. The SADC region remained on the frontlines of climate change, in particular with regard to the impact on food security. In view of the overall food decline during the period 2017/18, member States were wary of the likely effects of El Niño-induced conditions for the 2018/19 cropping season and were developing contingency plans to enhance drought preparedness. Vulnerability assessment measures were being undertaken by member States under the SADC Regional Vulnerability Assessment and Analysis Programme, with best practices being shared and joint measures taken in anticipation of any further food insecurity situations. SADC member States were greatly appreciative of assistance from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and other agencies and were committed to working with all partners on shoring up disaster preparedness programmes.

20. **Mr. Yaakob** (Malaysia), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that globalization was shaping a new era of interaction between countries, economies and peoples and that, while that increased contact brought enormous positive opportunities, it also led to repercussions for different groups of people. Social development had always been a priority for ASEAN, as outlined in many of its documents and reflected in its various regional instruments and mechanisms.

21. In aiming to build a community of cohesive, equitable and harmonious societies, ASEAN member States strived to provide access to opportunities by rising above the barriers of religion, race, language, gender and social and cultural background, nurturing human potential to the fullest and upholding social justice. Efforts such as reducing poverty, building decent and safe communities, providing care for older persons, facilitating universal access to education and skills-development, promoting the welfare of children and protecting them from abuse and empowering marginalized citizens to move forward with confidence and dignity brought long-term economic benefits and created a more stable international political and economic environment. To that end, ASEAN aligned its work not only with its own instruments, but also with its ongoing efforts to build an inclusive community that promoted a high quality of life, equitable access to opportunities and the protection of human rights.

22. The ASEAN community would continue to play an active role in socioeconomic development at the national, regional, and international levels, with the social development agenda an integral part of its economic, political, security-related and sociocultural work. ASEAN looked forward to engaging with the United Nations and its agencies, as well as other potential partners in working towards a more prosperous and inclusive global community. It welcomed collaboration with the United Nations, individual Member States and other partners to support social development issues in the region and work towards achieving the 2030 Agenda.

23. **Ms. Fitzgibbon** (European Union), speaking also on behalf of the candidate countries Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process country Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth held in Gothenburg, Sweden, in 2017 had provided a unique opportunity for promoting social development in the European Union. The European Pillar of Social Rights, which had been announced at the Summit, would serve as a compass for convergence towards better working and living conditions in the European Union. It would focus on 20 principles in three main areas: equal opportunities and access to the labour market, fair working conditions, and social protection and social inclusion. The Pillar would also provide the main guidance for implementing the social dimension of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals in the European Union.

24. Social protection systems were strained on account of demography, as expenditure on health care, pensions and long-term care was growing, while financing was diminishing, owing to a shrinking workforce. Over the next decade, updating the model of social protection could prove to be the greatest structural challenge in Europe. The European Commission had proposed guidance on adapting social protection systems to the changing world of work and better protecting people in non-standard work and self-employment.

25. Adult learning was increasingly important, as even the most basic tasks in the future economy would require a broader set of digital, service and people-oriented skills. The New Skills Agenda for Europe provided a framework to make such a shift and to reduce inequalities in the labour market by ensuring that people had the skills they needed. The Youth Guarantee programme, which offered all young people under the age of 25 years an offer of employment, apprenticeship or education, had provided opportunities to more than 3.5 million people each year since 2014. Another 2.4 million had received direct support from the Youth Employment Initiative, the main financial resource for implementation of the programme. Although youth unemployment was at its lowest level since 2000, further efforts would be needed to reach those who had fewer opportunities. In that connection, the European Solidarity Corps, a new initiative, offered socially minded young people the opportunity to work or volunteer in the European Union or abroad in areas such as education, health care, social integration, working with vulnerable groups, and environmental protection.

26. In view of the challenges of balancing work and family life, solutions should be found to give all people a real choice in how they wanted to shape their lives. Women's increased participation in the labour market would reduce the gender gap in employment, which remained above 11 per cent. In the interest of reducing the gender pay gap, the Commission had made a recommendation in 2014 and the European Union had adopted an action plan for 2017–2019. The Commission was encouraging an equal distribution of caregiving and household responsibilities between women and men,

and an initiative on work-life balance had been designed to help caregivers. The initiative included a proposal for a directive on parental, paternity and carer's leave and other policy guidance to reduce economic disincentives for women to work.

27. Unfortunately, persons with disabilities in the European Union continued to be underrepresented in employment and in tertiary education. As a party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the European Union continued to mainstream disability issues in its actions to combat unemployment and was working towards the full and equal participation of persons with disabilities in society. The European Union disability strategy for 2010–2020 would be revised in order to take stock of the implementation of the Convention and to assess the effectiveness of the strategy. Progress continued to be made towards the adoption of a European Accessibility Act, which would harmonize accessibility requirements in the European Union.

28. The European Consensus on Development would be a key instrument for supporting social development globally, as it was designed to support the achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals in an integrated manner. According to the Consensus, the European Union and its member States would promote gender equality and a human rights-based approach to development. The European Union also intended to work more effectively with all partners, including with States at all stages of development. It would continue to target its assistance to the least-developed and conflict-affected countries, while also strengthening its partnerships with middle-income States, which would be critical for implementing the 2030 Agenda and addressing social development and rising inequalities within countries. Working towards the Sustainable Development Goals would necessitate broad partnerships with various stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society organizations and academia.

29. **Mr. Skinner-Kleé Arenales** (Guatemala), speaking on behalf of the Group of Friends of Older Persons, said that the demographic trend of ageing societies posed new challenges to development. Societies should be able to benefit from the meaningful contributions made by older persons, and policies should be designed to promote social inclusion, intergenerational solidarity and the full and effective enjoyment of the human rights and dignity of older persons. Older persons should be not only recipients of special care and social protection, but also active agents and beneficiaries of change.

30. One of the most pressing challenges to the welfare of older persons was poverty and the related difficulties. Nevertheless, older persons were often called upon to provide for the household and care for other family members. Programmes, policies and adequate legal frameworks should be designed to provide for the full social inclusion and participation of older persons, free from all forms of discrimination and violence. Such action would support their dignity, empowerment and ability to fully enjoy their human rights and fundamental freedoms and contribute to development, which was the key to successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the 2002 Madrid Political Declaration and a response to the challenges and opportunities of ageing in the twenty-first century.

31. A rights-based perspective on ageing must have a place in the policy approaches of every State to ensure inclusive social development. The Group invited all relevant actors to promote such a perspective at various levels. Although implementation of the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing could have positive implications for the enjoyment of some rights by older persons, the Plan of Action was a non-legally binding instrument that addressed ageing issues from a developmental perspective and did not comprehensively address gaps in protection. Furthermore, the progress of implementation was uneven and gaps between policy and practice remained.

32. Nevertheless, the collective efforts of the international community could achieve sustainable and adequate social and economic policies for older persons. Countries must work together to ensure the well-being of older persons, address issues related to their social integration and protect their dignity and rights, leaving no one behind.

33. **Mr. Juntura** (Finland), speaking as a youth delegate, referred to his personal experience of anxiety, depression and mental illness. He said that, even in stable societies, less than half of the people who needed mental health services received the treatment they required. As youth made up a large part of that population, as well as a majority of the world population as a whole, there was an urgent need to pay attention to youth mental health. Sustainable peace could be achieved only through inclusiveness and meaningful participation of youth, women and civil society. Youth engagement also played an important role in countering violent extremist narratives and in conflict prevention.

34. Nevertheless, barriers to access to mental health services, powerful stigmas and discriminatory policies all posed obstacles, especially to vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, persons with disabilities, migrants

and the community of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex and other persons. Action was needed to ensure their enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health and to build socially cohesive communities.

35. An international mechanism for young peoples' rights should be established, and a holistic approach to ensuring the enjoyment of such rights should be adopted. The attitude that mental illness was a personal failure should change; the failure actually lay in societal responses to mental and brain disorders.

36. **Ms. Haas** (Austria), speaking as a youth delegate, said that she had travelled to different regions of her country and spoken with young people from all backgrounds. They were scared by the attempts to focus on differences rather than similarities, and were concerned by demagogy and the increasing polarization of societies. Such fears stemmed from both actual and perceived disparities in opportunities. While some differences were physically apparent, the differences very often included beliefs, socioeconomic backgrounds and opportunities. Many people experienced unjust or unfair treatment in one form or another because of the group to which they belonged. Despite the disparities in opportunities, and the multiple forms of discrimination, young people continued to demonstrate an extraordinary will to tackle the challenges that they faced.

37. Her country had been the first to allow voting from the age of 16 at all political levels, thereby offering more opportunities for youth to actively shape their surroundings. Young people had a desire to volunteer and cooperate regardless of ideological boundaries, and they offered creative and innovative ideas for reducing inequalities. Over half of Austrian youth was involved in voluntary activities. The Sustainable Development Goals had the potential to lead to a world based on the principles of freedom, equality and solidarity, which should be understood from a global and inclusive perspective with respect for universal human rights. Young people had a right to participate in decision-making at the international level, and it was important to reduce inequalities among them, so that the world could benefit from their contributions and diversity.

38. **Mr. Burri** (Switzerland) said that the 2030 Agenda encouraged the design of policies that considered the needs of future generations, including the global commitment to leave no one behind. Those concerned had not yet had their say, but the necessary resources could be provided. For instance, public funds could be saved by using insurance to compensate the unemployed or to ensure a sufficient income for older people. Where resources were limited, priority should be given to helping the most disadvantaged. Fighting poverty was a duty of justice and preventing it was a key issue for posterity. Social policies had an intrinsic sustainability dimension, especially when they concerned professional integration or reintegration, and youth employment was a political priority in Switzerland. In the absence of certainty about the needs of future generations, Member States should focus on the quality and sustainability of mechanisms to fight poverty and promote inclusion. At the same time, the Commission for Social Development played an essential role in addressing the underlying causes of poverty. The Commission commanded the attention of decision-makers, and its role had added value in the context of the 2030 agenda.

39. **Mr. Robert** (Switzerland), speaking as a youth delegate, said that cohesion was a fundamental component of any society that wished to develop peacefully, but could be achieved only by listening to all sectors of the population, particularly persons in vulnerable situations. Integration into the labour market was essential for young people and older workers alike, and their distinct challenges must be addressed in order to ensure intergenerational cohesion. Cohesion also called for tolerance, and the inclusion of minorities, especially migrant populations, made diversity a strength. Young people everywhere had opportunities for international mobility and many different paths and perspectives were open to them. Contacts between populations of different origins and different socioeconomic backgrounds were crucial, and exchanges between them helped to improve knowledge of "the other". Social diversity made it easier to form such links and diminished mistrust and unfamiliarity. Growing inequalities at the national and international levels threatened the balance and unity of communities, and it was the responsibility of every community to give each of its members the opportunity to be both a source of, and a stakeholder in, its development.

40. **Ms. Karugu** (Kenya) said that no country or region was immune to social and economic inequalities. The consequences of rising inequality were deprivation and continuous conflict, which led to unstoppable radicalization and violent extremism. The people-centred development approach of the 2030 Agenda was in line with the Kenya Vision 2030 development blueprint, which included social development as one of its four main pillars. The Government was bound by the Constitution to guarantee all Kenyans their economic, social and cultural rights, and to provide a social safety net to the underprivileged and their dependants. As a means of maintaining inclusive growth, government-funded social assistance, including cash transfer

programmes that assisted persons in vulnerable groups, had benefited over 1 million households.

41. Kenya was working towards universal health coverage for all citizens as part of its Big Four Agenda. The Government also aimed to increase food and nutrition security and the availability of enhanced affordable housing, and to expand the manufacturing base. The Agenda had been designed to benefit all of society and to improve the circumstances of women and youth, who tended to bear the brunt of societal inequities. The Government had reserved 30 per cent of all public tenders on works, goods and services exclusively for women, youth and persons with disabilities. In combination with various other initiatives, such as the Huduma Kenya programme, the economic and social conditions of hundreds of thousands of people had been improved and access to public services had increased.

42. **Ms. Bavdaž Kuret** (Slovenia), welcoming the theme of the International Day of Older Persons for 2018, said that her country respected and supported older human rights champions. Slovenia was among the most rapidly ageing countries in the European Union, and by 2030 more than 25 per cent of the population would be over the age of 65. Discussions on an integrated and comprehensive approach to long-term care were continuing in the country. A conference on end-of-life issues had been organized by the National Council and the Human Rights Ombudsperson in October 2017. A national exhibition entitled "Ageing: a society for all", displayed at various locations throughout 2018, had been designed to raise awareness of the serious challenges faced by older persons in exercising their human rights.

43. **Ms. Svetelj** (Slovenia), speaking as a youth delegate, said that, although the overall level of life satisfaction among young people in her country was high, the lack of youth participation in decision-making was alarming. Despite often being seen as passive, young people were ready to participate, and they called for increased transparency, responsibility and action, clear accountability and less bureaucracy. Such changes went hand in hand with a rise in youth participation. Goal 10 of the Sustainable Development Goals, to reduce inequality among countries worldwide, was an important, but often overlooked goal. With increased global youth participation, global equality would be taken more seriously.

44. **Ms. Bisselink** (Netherlands), speaking as a youth delegate, said that she had experienced a feeling of exclusion in her country as a child of non-Western ethnicity. Many young people from marginalized and vulnerable groups had experienced the same feeling. Meanwhile, some native Dutch people were of the view that the Government cared more for refugees, and they too felt excluded, with no access to politics or policymaking. Almost all young Dutch people agreed that social polarization was among the root causes of violent extremism. Western States should take responsibility for the 2030 Agenda, as the Sustainable Development Goals, with themes such as inequality, youth, peace and security and education, were not applicable only to developing countries. Western States should take inequalities seriously in order not only to reach Goal 10, but also to effectively and sustainably prevent violent extremism. They should adopt ambitious plans and national policies connecting measures to combat inequalities with the youth and peace and security agenda, with a focus on creating equal opportunities for participation for all young people.

45. **Ms. Elgibreen** (Saudi Arabia) said that her country supported the approach proposed by the Secretary-General in his report on the plan of action to integrate volunteering into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (A/73/254) and, in that connection, had developed policies to encourage volunteerism and programmes to promote social solidarity. Saudi Arabia welcomed the conclusions and recommendations set out in the report of the Secretary-General on inclusive development for persons with disabilities (A/73/211/Rev.1) and supported measures to raise awareness of disability issues in relation to development and to improve coordination among United Nations agencies, with a view to empowering persons with disabilities. Saudi Arabia had strived to improve the quality of services provided to persons with disabilities in order to ensure prosperity for all groups in society. Accordingly, it had placed special emphasis on the needs of persons with disabilities when drafting its development plan for the period 2015–2019.

46. Saudi Arabia also attached great importance to improving educational outcomes. The Ministry of Education had launched an initiative to enhance cooperation among schools, families and the broader society, with a view to developing children's skills and inculcating moral values. The Family Affairs Council was working to strengthen the position of the family in society as part of its effort to integrate family policies into the national framework for sustainable development.

47. Older persons enjoyed special status in Saudi Arabia. The King Salman Social Centre employed state-of-the-art methods to care for older persons that preserved the connection between older persons and the broader society. In accordance with a royal decree,

Saudi Arabia provided educational and literacy services to its illiterate citizens, including older persons. The decree also stipulated that older persons of both genders must be given the opportunity to benefit from various social programmes and services.

48. **Ms. Rodríguez Abascal** (Cuba) said that social justice, solidarity, equality and respect for human rights were essential to ensure the survival of the human species. The developed countries should comply with their official development assistance commitments; promote a just international economic order; end protectionist and discriminatory policies in trade matters against countries in the South; consciously assume their historical responsibility with regard to the environmental crisis; and allocate to development the significant resources that were currently devoted to war.

49. In support of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, Cuba had implemented a strategy aimed at promoting the comprehensive development, self-realization and full social integration of persons with disabilities. The country's youth policy also had a strong social component, focusing on providing training and employment opportunities for young people and ensuring their participation and representation in decision-making processes. With regard to the elderly, Cuba welcomed the report presented on the third review and appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing. In a country in which it was estimated that there would be 3.3 million people aged 60 or over by 2030, attention to the elderly was a priority.

50. With the active participation of civil society, multisectoral public policies were having a direct impact on families. In that regard, consultations on a new constitution had been launched with the participation of all Cubans, whether residing in the country or abroad. The text strengthened or developed a wide range of rights for families, youth, elderly persons and persons with disabilities and complied with the relevant international instruments to which Cuba was a party.

51. Cuba had already met several targets of the Sustainable Development Goals despite the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed for almost 60 years, which had a direct impact on the country's social development. By deploying over 55,000 Cuban health professionals to 67 countries, Cuba was putting into practice its commitment to work towards creating a just, equitable and inclusive world in which people should be at the centre of sustainable development.

52. **Ms. Miyazaki** (Japan) said that her country was working to build a society in which every person could actively participate regardless of their age, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression or disability status by raising awareness to eliminate discrimination, addressing economic disparity and poverty and improving working conditions.

53. International efforts were imperative to achieve a society in which no one would be left behind. In that regard, Japan would build on the momentum of the Paralympic Games to be held in Tokyo in 2020 to promote the active participation of persons with disabilities in various sectors, including sports. In February 2017, it had adopted the Universal Design 2020 Action Plan, which it had continued to implement by promoting universal design and a society free from mental barriers.

54. As part of its efforts to support stable and self-sustaining growth in Africa, Japan had been working towards achieving quality growth by promoting robust health systems, supporting education and vocational training for young people, promoting the rule of law through capacity-building in juvenile justice systems and accelerating women's social advancement. Japan had also been implementing its commitment, made at the sixth Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), to invest $30 billion from both governmental and private sector sources. Preparations were under way to host the TICAD ministerial meeting in October 2018; the seventh TICAD summit in August 2019; and the World Assembly for Women in March 2019.

55. **Mr. Habich** (Peru) said that implementation of the social component of the 2030 Agenda should focus on the empowerment of people, particularly the most vulnerable social groups, and the development of social inclusion programmes. In that regard, social development and well-being were among the core themes of the country's General Government Policy. One of the goals of the policy was to drastically reduce the prevalence of anaemia in pregnant women and children under the age of 3 years, for which a multisectoral plan had been launched at the local, regional and national levels.

56. Committed to achieving the targets set out in the Montevideo Consensus on Population and Development, Peru had hosted the third session of the Regional Conference on Population and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean in August 2018 and would be holding the presidency of the Regional Conference for the period 2018–2020.

57. Peru had made significant progress in recent years as a result of sustained economic growth combined with sound macroeconomic policies. However, economic

growth was not enough to ensure social development: public policies aimed at combatting poverty and promoting social inclusion were also required. The Government had consequently established the goal of reducing poverty by 15 per cent and providing water, sanitation, electricity and telecommunications services to all households. One of the mandates of the Ministry of Development and Social Inclusion of Peru was to coordinate social policies and programmes for different sectors and levels of government to ensure access to quality public services and to opportunities that led to economic growth.

58. **Mr. Al-Khaqani** (Iraq) said that his Government had put in place social protection programmes that were aimed at creating an integrated social protection system that empowered the marginalized, especially older persons and those with special needs. Civil society organizations and social media were used to monitor the situations of those who lacked family caregivers, so that they could be provided with shelter and other forms of protection, when necessary. The Government was discussing a draft law on social security that complied with constitutional requirements, national legislation and international instruments.

59. A fund had been established at the Ministry of Youth and Sport to help youth set up small businesses. A Government programme to train youth in business administration and entrepreneurship had reduced their reliance on Government jobs and boosted self-employment. An Iraqi youth parliament had been established to prepare youths for political life and leadership roles, particularly with respect to national reconciliation efforts following the liberation by security forces of Iraqi territory previously held by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

60. The eradication of illiteracy globally was an important objective that should be integrated into adequately funded educational strategies and plans. The concept of lifelong learning should be promoted through investments in national educational systems. Iraq welcomed the assistance given by UNESCO to Member States to help them eradicate illiteracy.

61. **Mr. Chatha** (Pakistan) said that poverty and inequality were multifaceted challenges that needed multipronged solutions. Consequently, his country's policies were aimed at promoting financial inclusion, agricultural growth, rural development, the provision of educational opportunities and poverty eradication. The Government considered the provision of quality education for the less privileged members of society to be its foremost priority, and its innovative initiatives had led to the enrolment of 2.5 million students in the previous three years.

62. As part of its efforts to create new opportunities for all, Pakistan had established its Vision 2025 for long-term sustainable development. Initiatives included the Benazir Income Support Programme, a national social safety net programme providing financial support to vulnerable groups, which had been widely acknowledged for its positive contribution. Other strategies were aimed at enabling women, youth and persons with disabilities to become real partners in development.

63. The Government had also put in place a results-based monitoring system to evaluate the progress of strategies to support the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. In addition, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project was an ambitious example of South-South cooperation for the achievement of shared economic and development objectives, offering economic opportunities for the people of Pakistan, the entire region and beyond.

64. **Mr. Chernenko** (Russian Federation) said that the implementation of the decisions of the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly was integral to the progressive implementation of the 2030 Agenda. His country could not, however, support the view put forward by a number of States in recent years that social development issues should be considered solely in the context of sustainable development and human rights. The Commission for Social Development should continue to take the lead within the United Nations system in formulating coordinated intergovernmental measures relating to young people, elderly persons, persons with disabilities and the family.

65. Despite the impact of unilateral sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation, his country complied fully with its social obligations to its citizens and was increasing financing for social programmes. In addition to strategies to support vulnerable groups, new national programmes were being developed to support population growth, increase life expectancy, maintain wage growth above the rate of inflation, halve the poverty rate, improve housing conditions and introduce digital technology in the economy and the social sphere. As a result of sound policies, the unemployment rate was at 5.2 per cent for the second year. The minimum wage was 72 per cent of the cost of living and would reach 100 per cent on 1 January 2019.

66. The State youth policy sought to expand opportunities for young people with a view to supporting their development and increasing capacity

for sustainable socioeconomic development. With regard to elderly persons, the current reform of the pension system was intended to increase their material well-being. Pensions would increase significantly, and persons of pre-retirement age would be guaranteed employment.

67. In February 2018, the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities had considered the initial report of the Russian Federation on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and commended the measures taken by the Russian leadership for the socioeconomic protection of persons with disabilities.

68. **Ms. Pham** Anh Thi Kim (Viet Nam) said that inequality threatened to undermine the progress that had already been made in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Moreover, the adverse effects of climate change exacerbated inequality and threatened the socioeconomic development of vulnerable countries. The increase in the frequency and severity of extreme weather and natural disasters were of particular concern, as observed during the recent Typhoon Mangkhut in the Philippines and the tsunami and earthquakes in Indonesia. Recovery and reconstruction efforts following a natural disaster could take many years, in particular in economically disadvantaged areas. Viet Nam called for the international community to further strengthen its commitments and efforts to respond to climate change and to ensure a more sustainable life for future generations.

69. The interrelation between the digital divide and inequality was another area of concern. Viet Nam had recently hosted the World Economic Forum on ASEAN on the theme "ASEAN 4.0: Entrepreneurship and the Fourth Industrial Revolution" as a forum for leaders and the business community to share knowledge and gain insight into the impact of industry 4.0 on ASEAN member States and the entire region. The digital revolution had profound impacts on all aspects of people's lives: technologies should reach and benefit all individuals.

70. **Mr. Phansourivong** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that social development was one of the three pillars of the national development plan of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, the other two being economic development and protection of the environment. His Government had established a five-year national socioeconomic development plan focused on human resource development, the eradication of poverty, and access to education and health care.

71. In line with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, his country had adopted an action plan to protect the rights of persons with disabilities, gather data and develop and formulate policies on disability, raise awareness and encourage the public to help and respect persons with disabilities. His Government had also submitted for consideration by the National Assembly a new law on persons with disabilities, which would become the main mechanism to guarantee the rights of persons with disabilities.

72. An education development plan had been adopted to improve access to quality education, and steady progress was being made towards universal primary enrolment and gender parity in education. Respect and care for the elderly had always been an important part of Lao cultural values, and older persons in a family were seen as a source of inspiration, love and warmth for other members of the family and community. His Government provided social security and public services for older persons and was committed to continuing its work to improve development so that everyone in the country would enjoy a better life.

73. **Mr. Giorgio** (Eritrea) said that Eritrea had been making modest strides in social development and was determined to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and the status of an economically prosperous middle-income country by 2030. It also hoped to become a socially harmonious nation that fulfilled the material and psychological needs of its citizens, regardless of their gender, creed, nationality, geographic location, age, physical condition or social status, and to make its contribution towards regional peace and progress.

74. Since independence, the Government had made considerable investments to expand social services. As a result, Eritrea had achieved all of the health-related Millennium Development Goals and was on track to attain full enrolment in primary school by 2020. A policy based on achieving social justice not only contributed to social cohesion and political stability but was the only path to sustainable development. However, more investment was required to consolidate the gains made and to accelerate socioeconomic development.

75. The seventy-third session of the General Assembly was being held at a time when the countries of the Horn of Africa had decided to close a dark chapter in their relations in which their resources had been squandered and their socioeconomic progress arrested. They had embarked on a new era of peace and economic integration that was anchored in a common history and shared future, which would surely accelerate social progress.

76. **Mr. Locsin** (Philippines) said that his country was committed to promoting and protecting the most

vulnerable sectors of society. Consistent with the 2030 Agenda, the country's long-term development vision "Our Ambition 2040" was focused on creating a prosperous and predominantly middle-class society in which all people could enjoy a stable and comfortable lifestyle and plan for their own and their children's future. In that context, the Government had implemented a cash transfer scheme that focused on the human capital development of around 5 million households.

77. The Philippines provided free universal access to quality tertiary education and was looking forward to a demographic dividend, with young people coming into the workforce in greater numbers in a country that was prepared to put their innate energy and educated talent to good use. Older persons, as the most vulnerable members of society, were protected through social programmes, and it was illegal to discriminate against them in employment.

78. Mindful of its commitment to leave no one behind, the Philippines joined other advocates in advancing the rights and freedoms of persons with disabilities and in protecting their dignity, recognizing that they were agents and beneficiaries of all aspects of development.

79. **Ms. Pobee** (Ghana) said that the key strategies identified by her Government to drive growth and development included revitalizing the economy, transforming agriculture and industry, strengthening social protection and inclusion, revamping economic and social infrastructure and reforming institutions delivering public services.

80. The Government had introduced a policy of free senior high school in 2017, which had catered for an estimated 90,000 young people who otherwise would have dropped out of high school owing to poverty. Steady progress had been made in the area of health and health services as a result of enhanced access to good-quality health care and nutrition. Community-based centres for health planning services across the country had helped to address the imbalance in geographical access to health care, and health coverage had significantly improved through the national health insurance scheme. The national social protection policy provided a comprehensive framework for the effective delivery of its social protection interventions. A law was being drafted to ensure the policy's sustainability in terms of funding and implementation. In line with the commitments set out in the 2030 Agenda concerning persons with disabilities and vulnerable populations, Ghana had taken measures to mainstream disability inclusion in its policies and had developed a manual on the framework and strategies for such mainstreaming.

81. International cooperation, support and partnerships were required to reduce national and global inequalities. The achievement of the targets of the 2030 Agenda depended in large part on the successful implementation of the objectives of the World Summit for Social Development; there was therefore a need to recommit to those objectives.

82. **Mr. Jaafar** (Brunei Darussalam) said that the population over the age of 65 years accounted for about 6 per cent of the total population of his country and was expected to double by 2035. Brunei Darussalam had therefore adopted measures to safeguard the welfare and promote and protect the rights of elderly persons, including the enactment of legislation on social protection. The National Council on Social Issues had established a special committee on persons with disabilities and the elderly, and it had approved an action plan that focused on a healthy and active life for senior citizens. Brunei Darussalam continued to ensure that elderly persons had access to comprehensive health-care services. The Ministry of Health and local communities had established an award programme to encourage senior citizens to lead healthy and active lives.

83. A "whole-of-nation" approach was taken to caring for the elderly, involving the private sector, non-governmental organizations and members of the local community. Platforms had been established to enable senior citizens to share their knowledge and experience with the younger generation. The family institution served as the main supporter of and provider for the elderly. Campaigns were conducted to raise awareness of the unacceptability of the abuse or neglect of senior citizens.

84. The International Day of Older Persons was celebrated annually in Brunei Darussalam. At the regional level, his country worked closely with the States members of ASEAN in promoting the quality of life and well-being of the elderly, as reflected in several regional declarations. Brunei Darussalam remained committed to United Nations initiatives for the promotion and protection of the elderly.

85. **Ms. Haokip** (India), speaking as a youth delegate, said that sustained economic development in India had lifted millions of people out of poverty. Financial inclusion and decent employment opportunities for all were at the heart of the country's development strategy. Digital empowerment played a key role in that regard, and a biometric system now covered more than 90 per cent of the population, enhancing access to vital services. As a result of the Government's financial inclusion programme, 320 million people now had bank accounts. The Government had disbursed more than

$25 billion through direct benefit transfers to more than 300 million beneficiaries and enhanced the efficiency of social security schemes. Under a loans programme for micro- and small businesses, more than 140 million loans had been granted.

86. As a step towards universal health coverage, the Prime Minister had launched a programme offering social security to 100 million vulnerable families. Given the importance of the welfare of families for sustainable development, women in India were entitled to 26 weeks of paid maternity leave, and it was mandatory for organizations with 50 or more employees to provide crèche facilities. Pension schemes, free legal aid services, targeted insurance coverage, higher interest rates on savings, tax rebates, travel discounts and preferential banking services contributed to ensuring a dignified life for older persons. The Accessible India Campaign promoted barrier-free access for persons with disabilities in public spaces and in virtual environments.

87. With half the population under the age of 25 years and two thirds under the age of 35, India was harnessing the demographic dividend by creating opportunities for the development of skills and entrepreneurship and by using digital technologies to improve access to information and knowledge. Programmes under the national youth policy focused on the promotion of a healthy lifestyle, social values and engagement in community affairs, politics, governance and voluntary social work.

88. **Ms. Abdelkawy** (Egypt) said that her Government had developed policies to address the multidimensional problems of poverty and inequality. Those policies were directed, in particular, at rural areas, women, persons with disabilities, older persons and school children, and included measures to increase low-income housing allocated for youth and address the problem of informal settlements. The Government had also developed a new, comprehensive health insurance law.

89. To address the problem of population growth, the Government had launched the "Two is Enough" programme, which was aimed at encouraging beneficiaries of social welfare programmes to have smaller families. The Government had also launched a programme to provide basic services to poor families that lacked access to clean water and sanitation. In addition, it had begun to implement its "Opportunities" programme, which would expand the social safety net and provide jobs for the neediest members of society. That programme was complemented by the conditional cash transfer programme and other social insurance schemes.

90. In implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Egyptian parliament had passed a law under which more than one million persons with disabilities received a monthly cash allowance. The law also contained provisions that guaranteed priority in education, training and employment to persons with disabilities, and reserved a set percentage of housing units for them. The social, economic and cultural rights of older persons were guaranteed under the Egyptian Constitution, which also stipulated that they must be given an adequate living allowance. The Government had recently announced a draft document on the rights of older persons. The Government had also sought to ensure financial inclusion for the country's youth by allocating $10 billion in funding for small projects and microprojects.

91. **Ms. Inanc-Ornekol** (Turkey) said that, since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, her country had taken steps to build a more resilient and sustainable society. Its national development model was people-centred and focused on economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection, and its development plan for the period 2019–2023 was consistent with the 2030 Agenda. Significant progress had been made in the areas of poverty eradication, job creation, better income distribution, social protection and access to basic services and rights.

92. Children, young people, elderly persons and persons with disabilities received special attention in the development process. Efforts to empower women and girls focused on removing economic and social barriers. Significant steps taken in the past decade to ensure the equal participation of persons with disabilities in social life included the adoption of legal arrangements designed to increase their access to education and the labour market, improve care services and diversify social protection measures. The national plan of action on ageing covered a wide spectrum of rights for older persons, and a commission on ageing had been established to raise awareness of their difficulties. Half the population of Turkey was under the age of 31 years, and the Government had developed structures and policies tailored to their needs. The age limit for election to Parliament had been lowered, and young people were encouraged to participate in decision-making processes.

93. As the host country of the largest refugee population in the world, Turkey was home to more than 3.5 million Syrians, 1 million of whom were children. The utmost importance was attached to their education, and Syrian children were enrolled in Turkish public schools as well as temporary centres. The Government not only addressed their material needs but also

provided cash assistance for every Syrian child attending school.

94. **Ms. Szuda** (Hungary), speaking as a youth delegate, said that over the past few months she had toured her country to promote the values and work of the United Nations and consulted with young people about topics of importance to them. The meetings had proved that young people had tremendous potential to serve as catalysts for positive change. In order to fulfil such potential, however, they needed to be empowered. High-quality education, inclusion in the labour market and participatory decision-making were key in that regard.

95. Young persons with disabilities faced barriers in access to secondary and higher education and employment. Many young girls and women still faced significant obstacles to reaching leadership positions. Discrimination on the basis of gender or ethnic, religious or socioeconomic background persisted, and no country had achieved full gender equality or ended discrimination in all its forms. All human beings must be provided with the means necessary for their full participation in society from the earliest age possible. Member States should help young people to fulfil their potential by adopting inclusive policies and following inclusive practices.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.